

BY HENRY GEORGE.

CHAPTER IV. (CONTINUED.)

PROTECTION AS A UNIVERSAL NEED.

And their arguments must be universal to have any plausibility, for it would be absurd to assert that a theory of national growth and prosperity applies to some countries and not to others.

Let us ask the reader who has hitherto accepted the protective theory to consider what its necessarily universal character involves. It was the realization of this that first led me to question that theory. I was for a number of years after I had come of age a protectionist, or rather, I supposed I was, for, without real examination, I had accepted the belief, as in the first place we all accept our beliefs, on the authority of others. So far, however, as I thought at all on the subject, I was logical, and I well remember how when the Florida and Alabama were sinking American ships at sea, I thought their depredations, after all, a good thing for the state in which I lived—California—since the increased risk and cost of ocean carriage in American ships (then the only way of bringing goods from the Eastern States to California) would give to her infant industries something of that needed protection against the lower wages and better established industries of the Eastern States which the Federal Constitution prevented her from securing by a state tariff. The full bearing of such notions never occurred to me till I happened to hear the protective theory elaborately expounded by an able man. As he urged that American industries must be protected from the competition of foreign countries, that we ought to work up our own raw materials and allow nothing to be imported that we could produce ourselves, I began to realize that these propositions, if true, must be universally true, and that not only should every nation shut itself out from every other nation; not only should the various sections of every large country institute tariffs of their own to shelter their industries from the competition of other sections, but that the reason given why no person should obtain from abroad anything they might make at home must apply as well to the family. It was this that led me to weigh arguments I had before accepted without real examination.

It seems to me impossible to consider the necessarily universal character of the protective theory without feeling it to be repugnant to moral perceptions and inconsistent with the simplicity and harmony which we everywhere discover in natural law. What should we think of human laws framed for the government of a country which should compel each family to keep constantly on their guard against every other family, to expend a large part of their time and labor in preventing exchanges with their neighbors, and to seek their own prosperity by opposing the natural efforts of other families to become prosperous? Yet the protective theory implies that laws such as these have been imposed by the Creator upon the families of men who tenant this earth. It implies that by virtue of social laws, as immutable as the physical laws, each

nation must stand jealously on guard against every other nation and erect artificial obstacles to national intercourse. It implies that a federation of mankind, such as that which prevents the establishment of tariffs between the states of the American Union, would be a disaster to the race, and that in an ideal world each nation would be protected from every other nation by a cordon of tax collectors, with their attendant spies and informers.

Such a theory might consort with that form of polytheism which assigned to each nation a separate and hostile God; but it is hard to reconcile it with the idea of the unity of the Creative Mind and the universality of law. Imagine a Christian missionary expounding to a newly discovered people the sublime truths of the gospel of peace and love—the fatherhood of God; the brotherhood of man; the duty of regarding the interests of our neighbors equally with our own and of doing to other as we would have them do to us. Could he, in the same breath, go on to declare that, by virtue of the laws of this same God, each nation, to prosper, must defend itself against all other nations by a protective tariff

Religion and experience alike teach us that the highest good of each is to be sought in the good of others; that the true interests of men are harmonious, not antagonistic; that prosperity is the daughter of good will and peace; and that want and destruction follow enmity and strife. The protective theory, on the other hand, implies the opposition of national interests; that the gain of one people is the loss of others; that each must seek its own good by constant efforts to get advantage over others and to prevent others from getting advantage over it. It makes of nations rivals instead of co operators; it inculcates a warfare of restrictions and prohibitions and searchings and seizures, which differs in weapons, but not in spirit, from that warfare which sinks ships and burns cities. Can we imagine the nations beating their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks and yet maintaining hostile tariffs.

No matter whether he call himself Christian or Deist, or Agnostic or Atheist, who can look about him without seeing that want and suffering flow inevitably from selfishness, and that in any community the golden rule which teaches us to regard the interests of others as carefully as our own would bring not only peace but plenty? Can it be that what is true of individuals ceases to be true of nation—that in one sphere the law of prosperity is the law of love; in the other that of strife? On the contrary universal history testifies that poverty, degradation and enslavement are the inevitable results of that spirit which leads nations to regard each other as rivals and enemies.

Every political truth must be a moral truth. Yet who can accept the protective theory as a moral truth?

A few months ago I found myself one night, with four other passengers, in the smoking car of a Pennsylvania limited express train traveling west. The conversation, beginning with fast trains, turned to fast steamers, and then to custom-house experiences. One told how, coming from Europe with a

trunk filled with presents for his wife, he had significantly said to the custom-house inspector detailed to examine his trunks that he was in a hurry. "How much of a hurry?" said the officer. "Ten dollars worth of a hurry," was the reply. The officer took a quick look thro' the trunk and remarked, "That's not much of a hurry for all this." "I gave him ten more," said the story teller, "and he chalked the trunk."

Then another told how under similar circumstances he had placed a magnificent meerschaum pipe so that it would be the first thing seen on lifting the trunk lid, and, when the officer admired it, had replied that it was his. The third said he simply put a green-back conspicuously in the first article of luggage; and the fourth told how his plan was to crumple up a note and put it with his keys in the officer's hands.

Here were four reputable business men, as I afterward found them to be—one an iron worker, one a coal producer, and the other two manufacturers—men of at least average moralitv and patriotism, who not only thought it no harm to evade the tariff, who made no scruple of the false oath necessary, and regarded the bribery of custom officers as a good joke. I had the curiosity to edge the conversation from that to the subject of free trade, when I found that all four were staunch protectionists, and by edging it a little further I found that all four were thorough believers in the right of an employer to discharge any workman who voted for a free trade candidate, holding, as they put it, that no one ought to eat the bread of an employer whose interests he opposed.

I recall this conversation because it is typical. Whoever has traveled on transatlantic steamers has listened to conversations, and is aware that the great majority of the American protectionists who visit Europe return with purchases which they smuggle through, even at the expense of a "custom house oath" and a greenback to the examining officer. Many of our largest undervaluation smugglers have been men of the highest social and religious standing, who gave freely of their spoils to churches and benevolent societies.

(TO BE CONTONUED.)

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